

## WHAT THEY'RE SAYING: CALIFORNIA'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION

**SACRAMENTO** — The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) today submitted to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) a proposed amendment to the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) Section 1115 demonstration related to transitional rent services and the new Section 1115 demonstration request, entitled the California Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment (BH-CONNECT) demonstration.

"DHCS has proposed a bold vision to expand the continuum of community-based services. BH-CONNECT provides a unique opportunity to further transform our specialty behavioral health system of care, increasing access to high-quality care for Medi-Cal beneficiaries through the expansion of available benefits and increased focus on quality improvement. This proposal further bolsters the system transformations under CalAIM and will have a significant impact for all Medi-Cal beneficiaries," wrote **Michelle Cabrera, Executive Director of the County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California**, in her public comment about the waiver.

"We continue to support the goals of the proposal to strengthen California's behavioral health system for children and youth across California, and specifically for child welfare system-involved youth, through cross-system coordinated services to ultimately improve health outcomes," wrote **Eileen Cubanski, Interim Executive Director of the County Welfare Directors Association of California**. "CalAIM and BH-CONNECT are pivotal initiatives that have the potential to improve services and outcomes for children, youth, and their families served by the child welfare services system. We look forward to continued engagement with DHCS and stakeholders to achieve these goals."

"I strongly believe that the proposed new Medicaid demonstration project under Sections 1115 of the Social Security Act to expand access to and strengthen the continuum of community-based behavioral health services for Medi-Cal members living with serious mental illness and serious emotional disturbance is going to drastically improve the overall health outcomes of Medi-Cal members. Being a Medi-Cal member myself, I understand where there is a gap in the services

available for the community. I strongly support this investment in building out the full continuum of care for behavioral health, with a special focus on populations more at risk,” wrote **Sonia Solano, a student at Touro University California.**

“Our members support many aspects of the proposed waiver. We are extremely pleased, for example, that the waiver will include activity stipends for foster youth. Our members also support the much-needed workforce initiative, as well as the cross-sector incentive program, which will strengthen the coordination of child welfare services and specialty mental health services,” wrote **Adrienne Shilton, Director of Public Policy and Strategy for the California Alliance of Child and Family Services.**

“We support DHCS’ goals to expand access to the continuum of care, including community-based and short-term inpatient behavioral health services, and strengthen Medi-Cal by creating a more person-centered, equitable and coordinated approach to maximizing health. The proposals included in BH-CONNECT seek to create a more robust continuum of community-based care while also building on investments counties have made in housing, mobile crisis teams, and outpatient mental health services for children, youth, and adults, including those justice-involved or experiencing homelessness,” wrote the **County of Santa Clara Health System.**

“Pursuing this federal demonstration opportunity will allow California to access additional funding and make critical expansions to the continuum of behavioral health services. The proposed suite of new community-based services to be provided by Medi-Cal are necessary expansions of care for our most vulnerable Medi-Cal beneficiaries. We believe the proposed set of services is comprehensive and, if ultimately provided by counties, will save lives,” wrote **Tara Gamboa-Eastman, MPP, Director of Government Affairs for the Steinberg Institute.**

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